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ABSTRACT

This study, initiated by the Scarborough (Ontario) Board of Education, examines principals' perceptions of their role in curriculum implementation, the difficulties inherent in this role and the support systems available to assist principals, and the leadership component of the principals' role in curriculum implementation. Interviews, based on a questionnaire, were conducted with a sample of 24 principals--10 from junior public schools (K-6), 6 from public schools (K-8), 4 from senior public schools (7-8), and 4 from collegiate institutes (9-13). Data--summarized and presented in the form of tables showing the percentage of responses to each question--are grouped according to the three concerns listed above (perceptions of role, difficulties and support systems, and leadership component). Implications of these findings are summarized as follows: (1) principals perceive that the board is fragmented in its approach to curriculum implementation; (2) principals need more time to exchange views with staff about the direction, goals, and evaluation of curricula; (3) more funds are needed for substitute teachers to fill in so that regular staff may attend inservice activities or visit other schools; and (4) more attention should be paid to specifics of the implementation process. A bibliography is included, and the interview schedule is appended. (TE)

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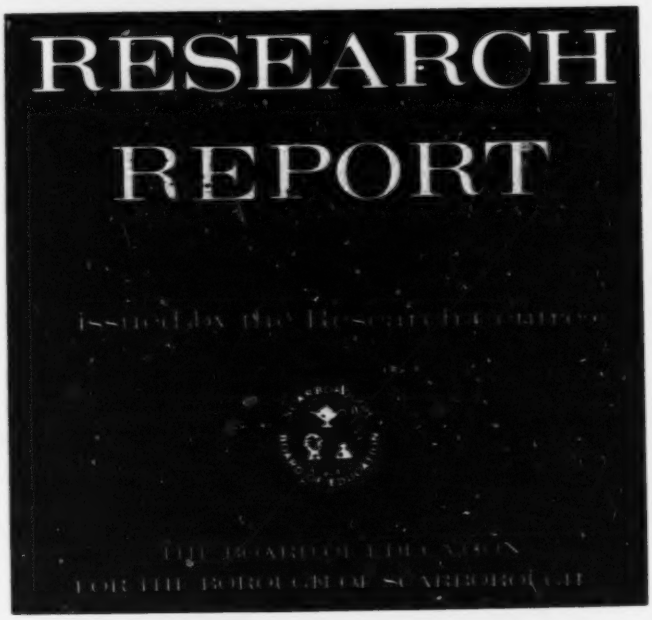

PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ROLE IN CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

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Elaine Minsky[1]

Marilyn E. Wideman[2]

H. J. Dilling[3]

PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ROLE IN CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

1 Project Co-ordinator

2 Research Associate

3 Research Director, Scarborough Board of Education

November, 1984

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I. INTRODUCTION

Curriculum implementation has been a standard term in the vocabulary of educators for many years and has been used to explain a variety of practices. More recently, however, educators have become aware of the complexities in attempting to implement curricula. Implementation is "changing practice" (Fullan and Park, 1981) and, as such, involves a process of professional growth and development. The production of a guide is only the first step in this multi-dimensional process. Consideration of the beliefs of teachers about education is just as critical to effective implementation (because beliefs shape the teachers' thinking and subsequent actions), and it is these beliefs that are also most resistant to change (Fullan and Park, 1981). In order for teachers and principals to become committed to changing practices, they must see, or have demonstrated to them, the positive outcomes that result from these changes.

There are many factors which affect implementation, and, if the implementation process is to be truly effective, these factors must work together in harmony. Table 1 presents a list of these factors from the work of Fullan and Park, who, as a result of their work on curriculum implementation, conclude that these variables relate to each other and create an interacting system. While the present study concentrates on only one factor in this process, the principal, it is important to bear in mind that this role is only one part of the interacting system--albeit a key one.

One of the many responsibilities that a principal has which has been highlighted more recently by researchers such as Venezky and Winfield (1979), McGeown (1979-80), Leithwood et al. (1978), Brookover et al. (1979), and Leithwood and Hughes (1981) is that of curriculum leader. It is in the hands

of the principal that the direct responsibility for improving instruction and learning lies. Numerous studies on school effectiveness have characterized the effective school leader as one who: (1) emphasizes achievement; gives high priority to activities, instruction, and materials that promote academic

TABLE 1

FACTORS AFFECTING IMPLEMENTATION[1]

A. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INNOVATION OR REVISION

1. Need for the change
2. Clarity, complexity of the change
3. Quality and availability of materials

B. CHARACTERISTICS AT THE SCHOOL SYSTEM LEVEL

4. History of innovative attempts
5. Expectations and training for principals
6. Teacher input and professional development (in-service, technical assistance)
7. Board and community support
8. Time line and monitoring
9. Overload

C. CHARACTERISTICS AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL

10. Principals' actions
11. Teacher/teacher relations and actions

D. FACTORS EXTERNAL TO THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

12. Role of the Ministry of Education and other educational agencies

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[1]M. Fullan and Paul Park, Curriculum Implementation (Ontario: Ministry of Education, 1981), p. 14.

success; shows strong visible presence in the classroom, (2) sets instructional strategies by taking part in instructional decison making and accepting responsibility for decisons about methods, materials, and evaluation procedures, (3) provides an orderly atmosphere, (4) frequently evaluates student progress, (5) co-ordinates instructional programs by ensuring that what goes on in the classroom relates to the overall goals and program of the school, and (6) supports teachers by encouraging attendance at professional meetings and workshops; provides in-service that improves teaching; and communicates to staff the overall goals of the program (Sweeney, 1983). That being said, it is important to note that many of the school effectiveness studies have been carried out in American urban elementary schools, and the findings may not be completely generalizable to the Canadian experience. There is also another important factor to consider when studying curriculum implementation. Schools are dynamic institutions with an almost infinite number of characteristics that are constantly changing and interacting. There is considerable evidence that teachers, students, instructional methods, and leadership are unstable school variables that may be contingent on the situation and not related to other school variables (Averch et al., 1972). However, the "effective principal" research does provide a fairly extensive body of consistent findings which emphasize that principals do make a difference in schools, and it points out a clear and focussed direction for educators.

II. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In view of the priority placed on curriculum implementation by the Scarborough Board of Education, the Curriculum Implementation Committee was initiated by the Program Department of the Scarborough Board of Education in 1982. Its mandate was to examine the current process of curriculum development, implementation, and review, and to make recommendations to improve this process in Scarborough. One of the committee's recommendations, in its discussion paper of September, 1983, was that a study be carried out to examine the role of the principal in curriculum implementation--a role which has been identified as a key one in the process of curriculum implementation. Accordingly, a study was designed with the following questions in mind:

(1) What is the principal's understanding of his/her role in curriculum implementation?

(2) What are the difficulties inherent in this role, and what support services are available to assist principals in curriculum implementation?

(3) How is the leadership component of this role carried out at present, and how could it be facilitated?

III. METHOD

A sub-committee, comprised of representatives from the Curriculum Implementation Committee, met with research staff to determine areas to be considered in questionnaire development. It was decided that a methodology consisting of interviews with principals, based on a questionnaire, would best fulfill the requirements of this study.

Questionnaire Design

Studies which had been carried out on the role (or duties) of the principal by local school boards were reviewed for a "base-line" job description (see bibliography). Through these sources, as well as through significant input from sub-committee members, a list of common themes and questions which had emerged from the literature review was drawn up. A set of questions regarding the role of the principal in curriculum implementation was formulated and sent to sub-committee members and research staff for feedback. The questions were then revised and pilot-tested with principals in two schools, using an interview schedule based on the questions. (See Appendix A for a copy of the final interview schedule used.)

Sample Selection

From the total population of 151 principals of junior public schools (JK-6), public schools (JK-8), senior public schools (7-8), and collegiate institutes (9-13), a stratified random sampling process, with the restriction that there be no fewer than four principals selected from any of the four

groups, was used to yield the following numbers: 10 from junior public schools, six from public schools, four from senior public schools, and four from collegiates. During the selection process, any principal of a school with a significantly large proportion of "English as a second language" (ESL) students (according to the judgment of Reading Centre personnel) was replaced by another principal from the same category of schools. The assumption was that there would be a greater probability of high-ESL schools departing from the prescribed curriculum, thus changing the school priorities to a degree that could create a bias in any data on activities related to curriculum implementation. On a similar assumption, principals of the six Scarborough occupational (secondary) and vocational schools had also been eliminated from the population before sampling.

After the sampling had been completed, a check was run to ensure that principals of program assisted schools (schools which receive additional teaching or support staff because of "inner-city" location or other factors) were represented adequately in the sample; supervision of the program in these schools represents an important factor in the delivery of curriculum.

Of the principals approached, only two declined to participate, one because of illness and the other because of scheduling problems. They were replaced by two others selected at random from the appropriate category.

Collection of the Data

A memo from one of the assistant superintendents of the Program Department was sent to the principals of the selected schools informing them of the study and requesting their participation. (See Appendix B for memo.)

A follow-up phone call was made by the project co-ordinator to ask for the principal's consent to participate in an interview and, on consent, to set up a convenient interview time. For the 24 principals involved in the study, Table 2 presents a summary of years of experience as a classroom teacher, as a principal, and as principal of the present school.

TABLE 2

SUMMARY OF EXPERIENCE OF PRINCIPALS

Type of Experience	Averages in Years (N=24)	Range in Years
Years of experience as a classroom teacher	12.0	5 - 21
Years of experience as a principal	9.0	2 - 19
Years as principal of present school	3.5	<1 - 6

Interviews took place over a three-week period in May and were conducted by the project co-ordinator at the schools involved. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. The nature of the interview was such that, although it was based on the questionnaire, many of the questions were sufficiently open-ended to allow principals to expand on specific issues as desired.

Data Analysis

Data were summarized through a manual tally of responses from which percentages were calculated. These are presented in tables in the "Results"

chapter. For some questions, where more than one answer was possible, percentages total more than 100.

While several categories of questions looked promising for further analysis, it was not possible to do so in this study due to time constraints. Discussion of possible future analyses is included in the summary chapter.

IV. RESULTS

While the general purpose of this study was to examine the role of the principal in curriculum implementation, the results are organized around the three major questions relating to the purpose of the study.[1] (See Chapter II.)

Principals' Understanding of Their Role in Curriculum Implementation

The first question dealt with the principals' understanding of their role in curriculum implementation. When isolating factors for closer study, the principals' understanding of curriculum implementation (i.e., their definition, whether they felt it had always been part of their job, and whether they thought that they could assume a more active role) appeared to be an important starting point in this study.

Table 3 reveals that principals generally agreed that curriculum implementation was putting into practice Ministry and Scarborough guides and felt that, while they had not received a job description that highlighted curriculum implementation as a primary function, it was implicit in the nature of the job. However, many principals implied that a clear statement of board expectations regarding curriculum implementation would be useful, particularly to new principals. Moreover, 88 per cent thought that they possessed the necessary skills to assume a leadership role in curriculum implementation. However, principals were divided as to what was the nature of this "leadership role". One-half of them saw the role of

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[1]It was originally intended to separate responses of collegiate principals from the total sample because of the differing structure of secondary schools. However, because the sample size of collegiate principals was small (N=4), and responses varied, these responses were included in the total sample, except where specifically stated.

TABLE 3

PRINCIPALS' UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR ROLE IN CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

Question	Response in Per Cent (N=24)	
What does curriculum implementation mean to you?	Putting into practice Ministry and Scarborough guides	Other definitions
	83	17
What should be the role of the principal in curriculum implementation?	An active/involved role	A supervisory role
	50	50
	Yes	No
As principal, did you receive a job description that included curriculum implementation?	13	88
Was it your understanding that curriculum implementation was a primary function of your job?	63	38
Does this aspect of your job need clarification in future job descriptions?	46	54
Do you possess the necessary background skills for a leadership role in curriculum implementation?	88	13
Do you share the leadership role of curriculum implementation with anyone else in your school?	96	4

the principal as being active and involved, while the other half saw the role as supervisory--that is, ensuring that those more directly responsible for curriculum implementation did their job. Indeed, 96 per cent stated that they shared this leadership role with someone else.

From Table 4, it is clear that, while principals generally saw curriculum implementation as a primary function of their job (63 per cent, as shown in Table 3), only 4 per cent thought that their teaching staff perceived them in that way. Rather, principals thought that their teaching staff saw them mainly as "resource people"--there to deal with specific problems, usually disciplinary, and to provide material resources.

TABLE 4

HOW DOES THE TEACHING STAFF IN YOUR SCHOOL PERCEIVE YOUR ROLE IN CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION?

Response	Percentage (N=24)
They see me as a person to turn to with a specific problem--usually disciplinary.	42
They see me as a provider of material resources.	38
They see me as a "master teacher".	8
They see me as having a minimal role.	8
They see me as a curriculum leader.	4

Difficulties Inherent in Principals' Role in Curriculum Implementation, and Support Services Available to Assist Principals

The second question relating to the purpose of the study focussed on the difficulties principals see as inherent in their curriculum implementation role, as well as to look at support services available to them.

Since a key ingredient in curriculum implementation is familiarity with the curriculum guides, finding the time to read the number of guides produced was seen as a potential difficulty for principals. Table 5 indicates that virtually none of the principals surveyed had read all of the guides, although many of these (71 per cent) considered the guides to be excellent and very useful to the classroom teacher. Frequently mentioned in the responses were the problems of finding the time necessary to become familiar with the huge volume of material in the guides and the frequent revisions to the guides. Consequently, considerable selectivity occurred in the reading of the guides. The guides read most frequently were those that were created in response to a major change (e.g., computer literacy), those written by someone known to the principal, those of personal interest, and those that had relevance to a subject area where a weakness was perceived. As well, certain sections of many guides were selected for reading.

Another central issue in curriculum implementation, for principals, is the lack of time available to meet with staff to discuss the implemention of guides. Table 6 integrates interview information concerning whether or not time was perceived to be available during the school day for this purpose; if so, whether it was scheduled on a regular or irregular basis; and how much time was set aside. (While no definition was given for "school day", any reference to staff meetings was interpreted as meaning part of the school day.)

TABLE 5

PRINCIPALS' KNOWLEDGE OF CURRICULUM GUIDES

Question	Response	Percentage (N=24)
Do you have time to read all of the curriculum guides?	Yes	0
	No	92
	Could make time	8
How do you choose the curriculum guide that you will read?*	No particular basis of selection (sometimes skim all guides; read the ones my staff members have written; ones that are brought to my attention)	54
	Focus on weak subject area	29
	Personal interest	25
	Response to major change	17
	Read the guide if teaching the subject	4
	Don't read any	4
How useful are the guides for the classroom teacher?	Excellent - very useful	71
	Good - fairly useful, depending on specific guide	13
	The guides are good, but the implementation process breaks down	8
	Too philosophic	4
	Not applicable	4

*Since principals were permitted to give more than one response to this question, percentages total more than 100.

As can be seen in Table 6, 46 per cent of the interviewed principals responded that regularly-scheduled time was available during the "school day", usually at least once per term consisting of a spot made available for curricular issues on the agenda of regular staff meetings, with some additional time as needed. This pattern tended to differ for collegiate principals in that they rarely met with their staff as a whole to discuss curriculum implementation. Meetings of a supervisory nature were held with department heads who, in turn, would meet with teachers teaching that particular subject.

TABLE 6

SCHEDULING OF TIME FOR CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

Schedule of Curriculum Implementation Activities in School	Percentage of Principals (N=24)
Regular, during "school day",* at least once per month (including additional times as needed)	38
Regular, during "school day", once or twice per term	8
Irregular, during "school day", as needed	38
Irregular, during "school day", seldom	13
None	4

*"School day" includes staff meetings referred to in the interviews.

The half of the principals who met irregularly with staff to discuss curriculum implementation usually met on an informal basis as needed, but again usually after class teaching periods were over.

Many of the 96 per cent of principals who stated that at least some time was available during the "school day" for curriculum implementation activities added further that, while after classroom teaching periods were over was usually the only time that they met, it was not a good time. It meant that extra-curricular activities had to be cancelled; furthermore, teachers were tired from already having spent a full day teaching.

Support services play a major role in assisting school personnel with implementing new guides and procedures. In Table 7, it can be seen, however, that, while most principals feel that the board (Program Department) does make in-service programs related to curriculum guides available to them, and state that they have attended, only 46 per cent find these sessions moderately or very useful. The reason for this might lie in the fact that most principals (71 per cent) have experienced curriculum in-services dealing mainly with content, not with methods of implementation. Such in-services appear to have been beamed largely at teachers.

Information on in-services dealing specifically with the leadership role of the principal in curriculum implementation can be found in Table 8. As can be seen from this table, most of the principals who were aware of in-services dealing directly with the role of the principal in curriculum implementation stated that they were given by organizations other than the Scarborough Board of Education (e.g., Principals' Associations, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Ontario Council for Leadership in Educational Administration, and Ontario

TABLE 7

PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF BOARD SUPPORT SERVICES AVAILABLE TO ASSIST IN CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

Question	Response	Percentage (N=24)
Are in-services from the board available for principals once a guide has been adopted?	Yes	46
	Yes (occasionally)	29
	No (for teachers, but principals may attend)	17
	No	8
Who provides these programs?	Program Department (Co-ordinators/Consultants)	88
	Program Department and Principals' Association	8
	No answer	4
Have you ever attended?	Yes	92
	Not recently	8
Do the in-services that you have attended at board level deal with the subject content of the guides or methods of implementation?	Subject content	71
	Combination of subject and method	12
	Philosophy of guide	17
How would you rate in-services for curriculum guides at board level?	Very useful	13
	Moderately useful	33
	Varies, depending on what is offered	21
	Poor	29
	No answer	4

TABLE 8

AVAILABILITY OF IN-SERVICES RELATED TO LEADERSHIP ROLE OF PRINCIPAL IN CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

Question	Response	Percentage (N=24)
Are there in-services that deal specifically with the leadership role of the principal in curriculum implementation? (Who offers these programs?)	Yes (board)	8
	Yes (other organizations)	42
	Yes (board and other organizations)	8
	No	42
Would you like to see more board in-services dealing with the role of the principal in curriculum implementation?	Yes	50
	No	42
	Depends on content and presentation	8
What would you like to see as content of these in-services? (All principals, including those who said they did not want more of such in-services, were invited to respond.)*	Methods of implementation	50
	Subject content	21
	General orientation	4
	No answer	38

*Since principals were permitted to give more than one response to this question, percentages total more than 100.

Secondary School Headmasters' Council). It is of interest that principals were divided on whether they wanted more of this type of in-service at the board level. Many stated that, based on past experience, these programs had not proved useful enough to warrant taking time away from school matters to attend.

When asked what they would like to have included in in-services related to their leadership role, 50 per cent said "methods of implementation". In elaborating, they stated that sessions on practical methods of curriculum implementation, with opportunities to share experiences, problems, and solutions with other principals in small groups, could prove to be valuable experiences.

Leadership Component of the Principals' Role in Curriculum Implementation

The third important focus of this study was concerned with how the leadership component of the role of the principal in curriculum implementation is carried out at present, and how it can be facilitated. In other words, this part of the study deals with the actual process of implementation--a crucial and often neglected element. Table 9 notes that only 15 per cent of the elementary principals use a consistent, formal process of curriculum implementation that includes an introduction, an evaluation, and a review.

Most of the principals (55 per cent) use an eclectic approach to curriculum implementation. Discussions in the staff room, principals' visits to classrooms, bringing in of resource people, the principal setting an example by teaching, and, sometimes, a clear enunciation of the overall goals and philosophy set for the school were all given as examples of methods of curriculum implementation. Moreover, a few of the principals had initiated a formal program evaluation and review process in a specific subject area. While this process was considered

TABLE 9

METHODS OF IMPLEMENTING CURRICULUM GUIDES (ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS)

Response	Percentage (N=20)
I combine a variety of approaches--no specific method	55
I use a formal process of introduction, evaluation, and review	15
Informal, on-demand	15
I see it as the teacher's responsibility	10
I meet with individual teachers	5

to be demanding of teacher and principal time, its benefits were considerable, according to principals who had initiated it.

Given the small amount of time devoted to curriculum implementation (see Table 6), however, these approaches must be considered, at best, sporadic. Indeed, many principals confirm that, while much effort is expended in creating excellent guides, the implementation process is neglected. Furthermore, Table 10, which shows that 60 per cent of elementary principals believe that they do not have a systematic, ongoing approach to curriculum implementation, reinforces this conclusion. It is unclear what kind of systematic process the remaining 40 per cent of respondents have, but it most likely reflects the "formal process" plus some of the "variety of approaches" responses of principals as indicated in Table 9.

TABLE 10

DO YOU HAVE A SYSTEMATIC ONGOING PROCESS FOR CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION? (ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS)

Response in Per Cent (N=20)	
Yes	No
40	60

Secondary school principals are not directly involved in implementing curriculum guides, as can be seen in Table 11.

TABLE 11

INVOLVEMENT IN IMPLEMENTING CURRICULUM GUIDES (SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS)

Response	Percentage (N=4)
Involved only as a resource person	25
Not involved - responsibility of department heads	75

Part of the leadership role in the process of curriculum implementation involves a monitoring of the usage of these guides in the classroom. In Table 12, it can be seen that each of many follow-up procedures is used in isolation, as well as in combinations (i.e., percentages total more than 100). Most principals felt that, based on their formal and informal follow-up procedures with the teaching staff, plus regular visits to the classrooms, they knew whether new guides were being used in the classrooms.

TABLE 12

WHAT FOLLOW-UP PROCEDURES HAVE YOU USED THIS YEAR TO ENSURE THAT NEW CURRICULUM GUIDES ARE BEING USED?

Response	Percentage* (N=24)
Regular visits to classrooms	54
Informal procedures	29
Formal program review	21
Check of exams, daybooks, pupil workbooks	21
No follow-up	21
Close supervison of department heads (collegiate principals)	17
Principal and teacher meetings	13
Responsibility of department heads (collegiate principals)	8

*Since principals were permitted to give more than one response, percentages total more than 100.

Table 13 shows that principals' ongoing support for teaching staff in implementing guides takes the form of many approaches, with "provision of resources" (67 per cent) seen as most common, followed by development of good rapport with staff. The four per cent of principals who play a minimal support role represents the response of one collegiate principal. It will be recalled from Table 11 that principals of these schools see themselves playing a less direct role in curriculum implementation than do elementary principals.

While principals interviewed in this study represented a wide range of schools and experiences, they expressed many common sentiments as they considered how the leadership role of the principal in curriculum implementation could be

TABLE 13

WHAT ONGOING SUPPORT DID YOU PROVIDE FOR YOUR TEACHING STAFF IN IMPLEMENTING GUIDES?

Response	Percentage* (N=24)
Provided resources	67
Developed good rapport with staff	50
Made informal contact with staff	38
Made regular classroom visits	25
Set example by teaching	13
Held regular staff meetings	8
Provided minimal support role	4

*Since principals were permitted to give more than one response, percentages total more than 100.

facilitated. One of the areas often discussed was the role of school board personnel, other than principals and teachers, in assisting with curriculum implementation.

As can be seen in Table 14, principals were fairly evenly divided when asked about a change in role for area superintendents. The majority of respondents who favoured a change in this role expressed strongly the sense of isolation that many principals feel and the consequent need for more contact and support from the area superintendent. They see the role of area superintendent shifting to meet their needs through increased contact with the schools, more support, and an increased area-wide evaluative function. While few principals see the area superintendent as being directly involved in curriculum implementation, several mentioned that the

role should include that of facilitator. It was felt that the area superintendent could organize specific curriculum events in subject areas for a family of schools and could also ensure that supply teachers are available to release staff to attend these events.

TABLE 14

DO YOU SEE A ROLE FOR THE AREA SUPERINTENDENT OR OTHER PERSONNEL IN ASSISTING PRINCIPALS WITH CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION?

Response	Percentage (N=24)
I would like to see a change in role for area superintendents.	54
I would not like to see a change in role for area superintendents.	46
I would like to see a different role than at present for co-ordinators.	79
I would not like to see a different role than at present for co-ordinators.	21

There was a higher degree of consensus as to a change in the role for co-ordinators, with 79 per cent of respondents favouring a change. Principals expressed the need for co-ordinators to be more directly involved in the schools, and to take more initiative in conducting programs in the schools. These could include demonstration lessons and taking a leadership role in evaluating and reviewing curriculum guides on a subject rotation basis. However, while some principals wanted co-ordinators to play more of a general evaluative role, others felt that this would alter the collegial relationship between teachers and co-ordinators.

Finally, principals were asked to identify what were, in their perceptions, the major barriers to curriculum implementation. Table 15 indicates that "time demands" and "broadness of job" were reported by 63 per cent and 50 per cent of principals respectively. Many of the other barriers might rightly be included in the category of "time demands" or "broadness of job" but are reported as stated by principals.

Some of the categories used require some explanation, and the following comments by principals serve as illustrations. The "time demands" barrier included the following: too much unnecessary paperwork, difficulty in setting priorities for the many demands placed on principals' time--particularly when many of the items demand immediate attention, and the difficulty in balancing time spent in relieving teachers of administrative tasks so that they can spend more time on curriculum implementation with the time that principals would like to spend directly on curriculum implementation. The "broadness of job" barrier included the problem of the many "hats" principals have to wear--from community relations expert, to social worker, to teacher. The "too many special external events and meetings" barrier was expressed separately from "time" by 25 per cent of principals because they felt strongly that these special weeks and events take valuable time away from curricular issues. These events also contribute to a fragmented approach to the very task--curriculum implementation--which should be allocated the highest of priorities as demonstrated through concrete example. The concrete example would be to eliminate some less important activities, as well as to provide needed support services. The "problems relating to small schools" barrier relates to the difficulty in maintaining the full range of activities and programs that are expected of schools when the numbers of students and teachers have declined

TABLE 15

MAJOR BARRIERS TO CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION IDENTIFIED BY PRINCIPALS (RANKED IN ORDER OF PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES)

Barrier	Percentage* (N=24)
1. Time demands	63
2. Broadness of job	50
3. Too many special external events and meetings	25
4. Lack of expertise in specific subject areas	13
5. Problems relating to small schools	13
6. Problems relating to program assisted schools	13
7. Staff problems	13
8. Changing role of schools	8
9. No barriers other than self-imposed ones	8
10. Lack of permanence of curriculum guides	4

*Since principals were permitted to give more than one response, percentages total more than 100.

dramatically. When there is only one teacher at each grade level, it is also difficult to free up the time of teachers so that they can share common issues.

Program assisted schools also present barriers to curriculum implementation, because of two main factors. One factor is the amount of time consumed by disciplinary and social work issues or, as one principal stated, "putting out fires". The other is the difficulty in following curriculum guides that assume certain basic concepts that some children in program assisted schools do not have.

The barrier of "staff problems" involves the lack of movement in the school system of some senior teachers (despite attempts by the board to encourage transfers) who sometimes tend to resist change.

The other categories are self-explanatory, except, perhaps, for "lack of permanence of curriculum guides". Although this barrier was not high on the list of concerns, it does reinforce statements made by principals in another part of this results section. This barrier refers to the feeling that teachers and principals are less likely to become familiar with, and to use, curriculum guides when the guides are perceived as changing too frequently. The process of curriculum implementation is a lengthy one, and school staff members have to feel that their commitment to the guide is a worthwhile one in terms of the balance between time required to assimilate and implement a new curriculum guide fully and the time that will elapse before the process must begin again.

V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This study was undertaken in response to a recommendation by the Curriculum Implementation Committee of the Scarborough Board of Education. It was designed to examine the role of the principal in the process of curriculum implementation. The study focussed on three main components:

(1) What is the principal's understanding of his/her role in curriculum implementation?

(2) What are the difficulties inherent in this role, and what support services are available to assist principals in curriculum implementation?

(3) How is the leadership component of this role carried out at present, and how could it be facilitated?

To look more closely at these points, an interview schedule was devised. Then, after first excluding from the population of Scarborough principals those responsible for occupational (secondary) schools and vocational schools, a stratified random sampling process was used to yield the following numbers of principals: 10 from junior public schools (JK-6), six from public schools (JK-8), four from senior public schools (7-8), and four from collegiates (9-13)--a total of 24 principals. A principal of any school judged to have a significantly high proportion of "English as a second language" (ESL) students, if selected during the sampling, was replaced with another principal from the same category. Individual interviews lasting approximately one hour were conducted with these principals over a three-week period.

Initially, the intention was to separate collegiate principals' responses

from the total sample because of the different subject/staff structure in secondary schools (i.e., department heads). However, because of the relatively few collegiate principals interviewed and the variation in their responses, they were included, in most cases, with the rest of the sample. Responses were calculated in per cent, and results were then organized into three sections relating to the three main components of the study.

Principals' Understanding of Their Role in Curriculum Implementation

Principals generally agreed upon the definition of curriculum implementation as involving the application, or putting into practice, of Ministry and Scarborough guides. While curriculum implementation as a primary function of the principal's job had never been spelled out in a formal job description, most principals felt that it was implied in the nature of the role. It was stated by many principals, however, that a clear statement of board expectations regarding curriculum implementation would be useful, particularly to new principals.

Although principals acknowledged their role as curriculum leaders, they were divided evenly as to what a leadership role in curriculum implementation should be. One-half of the sample saw the principal's role in curriculum implementation as being an active/involved one, while the other half saw the role as being primarily a supervisory one. It is also interesting to note that, while many principals viewed curriculum implementation as a primary function of their job, they felt that the teaching staff saw them mainly as "people to turn to with specific problems--usually disciplinary" and as "providers of resources", rather than as curriculum leaders.

Difficulties Inherent in Principals' Role in Curriculum Implementation, and Support Services Available to Assist Principals

None of the principals interviewed felt that there was enough time available to read all of the curriculum guides; they cited the main reasons for this as being the huge volume of material contained in the guides and the frequent revisions to the guides. Many principals stated that they were only "generally acquainted" with the guides and would focus on one particular guide if there was a specific problem or weakness in that area. However, most considered the guides to be excellent, based on their somewhat cursory knowledge of them, and very useful to the classroom teacher.

In terms of time devoted to curriculum implementation, under half of the principals stated that there was regularly-scheduled time available to meet as a staff to discuss curriculum matters, and that this time was usually during staff meetings after school. The situation was declared problematic for both regularly-scheduled and informal (irregularly-scheduled) meetings because it meant that extra-curricular activities had to be cancelled; furthermore, the staff members were tired from already having spent a full day teaching.

As a separate group, collegiate principals, because of the different structure of the secondary schools, saw themselves as having little direct impact on curriculum implementation. This function was carried out largely by the department heads, with the principal supervising the heads.

Principals also had some interesting perceptions concerning support services available to assist them in the process of curriculum implementation. In-services provided by the board were seen as being available, but principals were divided in their perceptions of the usefulness of such events, perhaps reflecting their experience with content-oriented rather than implementation-oriented in-service programs.

With regard to in-services that deal specifically with the principal's role in curriculum implementation, such in-services were seen to be given by organizations other than the Scarborough Board of Education. Furthermore, principals were almost evenly divided between wanting and not wanting more in-service programs of this type at the board level. The sentiment expressed was that they would be interested in more in-service programs only if the content were practically oriented to methods of implementation. One principal remarked that in-services dealing with subject content of guides should be mandatory for both teacher and principal, because both share in this process. Most stated, however, that unstructured professional activity days, devoted to the sharing of experiences, problems, and solutions, could prove to be a valuable experience.

Leadership Component of the Principals' Role in Curriculum Implementation

At present, it appears that most of the principals interviewed do not use a consistent, formal process of curriculum implementation that includes an introduction, an evaluation, and a review. However, most of the other respondents, who have an eclectic ongoing process of curriculum implementation, seem to combine a variety of approaches in a reactive manner that emerges as their overall organized plan. Many principals expressed the concern that, while much effort goes into creating the guides, the implementation process--the key ingredient--is neglected. Most feel that they try to facilitate the process by providing resources for the teachers; half of the principals also feel that the good rapport they have developed with their teachers operates as a facilitator.

Monitoring the use of the guides in the classroom is also done on an informal

basis--by visiting classrooms, by asking teachers what they are doing within their programs, and by informal discussions about curriculum with teachers.

To assist principals in their role as curriculum leader, certain changes in the roles of other board personnel were seen by principals as being beneficial. A slight majority of them suggested, when asked, that there be a shift in the role of area superintendent toward more involvement in the schools, thus helping to minimize the principals' own sense of isolation. While most principals were fairly realistic about the current demands on area superintendents, they still wanted them to have more contact with the schools and to be able to provide more feedback and support to principals. They also wanted area superintendents to take the initiative in organizing area-wide program evaluation in specific subjects, in having area-wide meetings on the process of curriculum implementation, and in providing supply teachers, at board expense, to free teachers to attend these meetings or workshops.

By far the greatest number of role-change suggestions by principals had to do with the co-ordinator. Principals want co-ordinators to have a greater presence in the schools, rather than just being available as resource people. They want co-ordinators to initiate contacts with schools, to plan and carry out workshops, and to conduct demonstration lessons in the schools on a regular basis. It was suggested that this might be done by concentrating on one subject intensively in a family of schools and by rotating subjects in subsequent years. Many principals also wanted co-ordinators to assume a more evaluative role, but others were concerned that this could destroy the collegial relationship that exists between teachers and co-ordinators. Some principals emphasized the advisability of ensuring that co-ordinators do not become too distanced from the everyday classroom experience.

Finally, the major barriers to their playing a more active role in curriculum implementation were seen by principals to be (in order of greatest to lowest percentages) as follows: (1) time demands, (2) broadness of job, (3) too many special external events and meetings, (4) lack of principals' expertise in specific subject areas, (5) problems relating to small schools, (6) problems relating to program assisted schools, (7) staff problems, (8) the changing role of schools, (9) self-imposed barriers only, and (10) lack of permanence of curriculum guides. While more detailed explanations can be found in the "Results" chapter, some interpretation is required. Generally, many of the barriers could be subsumed under the "time demands" barrier, although they were included separately in the form in which they were stated by principals. It should be noted, though, that the "time demands" barrier brought into focus the often-expressed feeling of principals that the board is fragmented in its approach to curriculum implementation. If curriculum implementation is indeed a priority, it was stressed that many competing programs and events such as "special weeks" should be eliminated so as not to absorb time and energy from curriculum implementation.

While many of the "time demands" were acknowledged to be an inevitable part of the principals' job, it was felt that the board could assist by providing a clear focus in one area and demonstrating this intention by eliminating less important activities and making available adequate support services (i.e., providing supply teachers to relieve regular staff so that they can attend workshops and visit other schools, etc.; planning in-services based on principals' needs; and encouraging greater involvement of co-ordinators in schools).

What these findings emphasize is the difficulty in attempting to regulate the process of curriculum implementation. Some principals clearly find it

difficult to organize time away from administrative matters for curriculum implementation and would like to have a structured program to accomplish this. Others, because of personal interest and their asserted leadership style, feel that they are able to create an atmosphere in the school that promotes curriculum implementation by providing the example themselves and by clearly setting overall goals for the staff.

Conclusions

This study, initiated in response to a recommendation from the Curriculum Implementation Committee, was an interesting first step in providing information of assistance in defining the responsibility of principals in the implementation of curriculum guides.

It is often difficult to find the right balance between the principals' autonomy and the direction provided by the school board. Certainly many principals reflected their ambivalence in this regard by wanting more structure and direction in curriculum implementation from the board and yet, at the same time, valuing their relative autonomy in curriculum matters. There are, however, improvements that can be made to any system without necessarily jeopardizing this delicate balance. It is hoped that the information gathered in this study can assist not only in maintaining, but also in improving, this balance.

Implications of Findings

There are some principals who, despite the many demands on their time, are able to play an active leadership role in curriculum implementation. This may be due to personal interest, energy, leadership style, or organizational ability.

However, it is equally important to recognize that there are other factors that interact with this leadership role in the process of curriculum implementation. These are highlighted by the following implications from the current study.

(1) There is a perception by principals that the board is fragmented in its approach to curriculum implementation. If curriculum implementation is a priority, then it should be the primary focus for a few years. Consequently, the board might consider eliminating some of the "special weeks and activities" that take time away from curriculum implementation.

(2) Principals expressed the need for unscheduled time during school hours when everyone is "fresh" to talk, as a staff, about the direction, goals, and evaluation of curricula. Many principals thought that a few unstructured Professional Activity (P.A.) days would allow them time to meet as a staff and plan in-school activities that enhance curriculum implementation.

(3) Principals wanted the board to demonstrate the priority placed on curriculum implementation by making more funds available for supply teachers to fill in so that regular staff may attend in-services and workshops and visit programs in other schools.

(4) In view of all the suggestions by principals, more attention should be paid to the specifics of the implementation process. The general feeling expressed was that, while the guides are good, they are "just tools". The process should not stop with the creation of the guides. Suggestions relating to the facilitation of the implementation process included the following:

   (a) Changing role for co-ordinators. Principals want co-ordinators to be more directly involved in schools by initiating and providing more in-services at specific schools, teaching demonstration lessons, and selecting schools or families of schools for intensive work each year in

a subject area. Also, more attention should be devoted to developing a method of implementation that accompanies each guide.

(b) Changing role for area superintendents. While many principals felt that the demands of the present role of area superintendents preclude much change, principals expressed regret that area superintendents did not have more contact with the schools and the programs offered. Principals often feel isolated, with minimal feedback about the job they are doing. Consequently, they want to see the area superintendent more involved in schools and with evaluation procedures.

(c) In-services for principals relating directly to their experience. Principals expressed the need for in-services on methods of implementation, but stressed that in-services should deal with practical applications, given the reality of time constraints and other school demands. It was further suggested that opportunities to meet in small groups to discuss curriculum implementation strategies and problems would be useful.

(d) Restriction of number of guides. Because the implementation process may take several years, it was noted that teachers and principals must feel a sense of permanence about the guides. The number of revisions and new guides that come out at present before the original guide is implemented can cause teachers and principals to become cynical about their usefulness and cautious about adopting new guides.

Suggestions for Further Study

Because of time constraints, it was not possible to analyze fully all of the data. However, there are several additional factors, such as type of school (JK-6, JK-8, senior public school, etc.) and size of school, that may prove fruitful for further analysis, although this would necessitate increasing the sample size.

In view of the difficulty in categorizing some of the interview responses, some consideration might be given also, during future studies of this type, to establishing a more structured questionnaire. Part of it might even be completed independently by the respondents. In any event, it could provide a better base for the interview if that is to be the sole means of collecting data.

With respect to future studies, further exploration of the teachers' perception of the principal's role in curriculum implementation could prove interesting in the light of the finding that principals generally feel that teachers do not regard them as curriculum leaders.

Finally, the development of a curriculum implementation procedure, pilot-tested in Scarborough schools, would seem to be a logical and valuable follow-up to the work of the Curriculum Implementation Committee and the Research Centre.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Schedule

The Role of the Principal in Curriculum Implementation

Introduction:

Curriculum implementation has been identified as a priority by the Scarborough Board of Education and the role of the principal is a key one in this process. In view of this, the Program Department would like your assistance in determining the present role of the principal in curriculum implementation and what you perceive to be some of the obstacles in attempting to implement curriculum guidelines.

The duties that a principal has to perform are many and varied. There are the usual problems of time constraints, budgetary considerations, staffing, etc. In order for a principal to assume an active role as curriculum leader, it is important that we examine the ways in which this leadership role can be facilitated.

Date: _____

PRINCIPAL'S ROLE IN CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

1. Size of School:
   Number of students _____
   Number of teachers _____
   Number of chairmen (by subject) _____
   (by division) _____
   Vice-principals: Yes _____ Number _____
   No _____

2. Type of School:
   JK-8 _____
   JK-6 _____
   Sr. Public _____
   Collegiate _____

3. Special Programs:
   (No. of classes)
   Special Education _____
   Enrichment (Gifted) _____
   Vocational _____
   ESL _____
   Other _____

4. Years of Experience as Principal: Elementary level _____
   Secondary level _____

5. Years of Teaching Experience: _____
   (exclusive of being principal or V.P.)

6. Do you teach at present: Yes _____ No _____
   If yes, how often? _____

7. Years as principal at present school: _____

8. Proportion of Senior Staff: _____
   Junior Staff: _____

PART 1

PRINCIPAL'S PERCEPTION OF HIS/HER ROLE IN CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

1. The term "Curriculum Implementation" is a general one and has been used to explain a variety of practices. What does "Curriculum Implementation" mean to you?

The definition that we have adopted for the purposes of this study is: "Implementation is the process of altering existing practice in order to achieve more effectively certain desired learning outcomes for students" (Fullan and Park: "Curriculum Implementation"). For our present situation, what this means is putting into practice specific Scarborough guides.

2. What should be the role of the principal in curriculum implementation?

3. When you applied for the job as principal, was there a job description presented to you that included curriculum implementation as part of your position?

Yes: _____

No: _____

(a) Was it your understanding that curriculum implementation (or putting into practice curriculum guides) was a primary function of your job?

Yes: _____

No: _____

(b) Do you think that this particular aspect of your job needs to be clarified in future job descriptions? If yes, could you be more specific?

Yes: _____

No: _____

4. Do you feel that your particular background and skills have prepared you to take a major leadership role in curriculum implementation? If yes, specifically what skills?

Yes: _____

No: _____ (How do you think the Program Department can help principals to acquire these skills?:)

5. Do you have time to read all of the curriculum guides that come into your office?

Yes: _____

No: _____ (On what basis do you select the ones that you will read? i.e. teacher request; personal interest; other criteria):

6. Of the guides that you have read, how useful do you think they are for the classroom teacher? If not useful, why not?

7. Do you share the leadership role of curriculum implementation with anyone else in your school?

PART II

PRINCIPAL'S PERCEPTION OF AVAILABLE SUPPORT SERVICES TO ASSIST IN CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

1. Are there "in-service" programs available to you, as a principal, once a curriculum guide has been adopted?

   Yes _____ No _____

   (a) Who provides these programs?

   (b) Have you ever attended?

   (c) Do they deal primarily with the subject content of the curriculum guide or do they also cover how principals might help teachers to implement the material?

   (d) How would you rate in-service orientation for curriculum guides in terms of general usefulness for principals?

   At the Ministry Level:

   At the Scarborough Level:

   Other organizations (e.g., OCLEA, OACD):

(e) FOR SECONDARY PRINCIPALS: Do you attend in-service programs for curriculum implementation?

Yes: _____

No: _____ (Who does? Vice-Principal? Department Head?):

2. To your knowledge, are there "in-service" programs available that deal with the leadership role of the principal in curriculum implementation? If yes, who offers these programs? (Ministry, Board, etc.)

Yes _____

No _____

3. Do you see a role for the area superintendent or other personnel in assisting principals with curriculum implementation? If yes, specify:

4. Would you like to see more "in-service" programs at the Board level dealing with the role of principals in curriculum implementation? If yes, specify time (i.e., during school hours, evenings, summers) and content:

Yes _____

Content:

No _____

PART III

INTERACTION BETWEEN PRINCIPAL AND TEACHER IN CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

1. What time is available during the school day for you to meet with staff to discuss implementation of curriculum guides? (Specify number of minutes and when they occur.) or If no time is available, when do you meet?

2. Do you use this time on a regular basis for curriculum implementation? If yes, how often?

   Yes _____; How often _____

   No _____

   (a) Do you feel that this is sufficient time? If no, how much time would be optimal but still realistic?

   (b) FOR SECONDARY PRINCIPALS: As a secondary school principal, do you think that there is enough flexibility in scheduling so that you can arrange to meet with Department Heads about curriculum implementation?

3. What methods do you use for implementing a curriculum guide with your staff?

e.g., - do you meet with entire staff regularly?
- do you meet with entire staff once and then individually?
- do you meet by division (Junior and Primary)?
- do you meet with individual teachers?
- do you invite resource personnel to come to your school? (Scarborough or other?)

(a) Is this a systematic ongoing process?

(b) How do you structure these sessions?

4. How do you think the teaching staff perceives your role in curriculum implementation?
   e.g., - look to you for guidance, leadership?
   - see you as a resource person?
   - don't consider curriculum implementation to be part of your role?
   - resent your "interference" in curriculum implementation?

5. What follow-up procedures have you used this year to ensure that new curriculum guides are being used in the classroom?

6. What type of on-going support did you provide for your teaching staff in implementing these guides?

7. What do you consider to be the major barriers in preventing you from playing a more active role in curriculum implementation?

APPENDIX B

Memo to Randomly Selected Principals

THE BOARD OF EDUCATION FOR THE CITY OF SCARBOROUGH

I N T E R - O F F I C E M E M O R A N D U M

To: Randomly Selected Principals

Date: April 17,1984

From: R.J. Goldring

Copy to: H.J. Dilling
E. Minsky
M.E. Wideman

Subject: Role of Principal in Curriculum Implementation

In view of the priority placed on curriculum implementation by the Scarborough Board of Education, the Curriculum Implementation Committee has recommended that a study examining the role of the principal in curriculum implementation be carried out by the Research Centre staff. Particular emphasis is to be placed on how the leadership component of this role could be facilitated.

The proposed study consists of a focussed, non-evaluative interview of approximately one hour or less. The intent is to clarify the present role of the principal so that realistic curriculum planning can result. Principals participating in this study will remain anonymous, and results will be identified by group and not individually. Your participation in this project would be appreciated.

Within the next two weeks, Elaine Minsky, Project Co-ordinator from the Research Centre, will contact you regarding your participation in the study and will set up a mutually convenient interview time if you wish to participate. Interviews will be conducted during the first three weeks in May.

Thank you for your consideration.

R.J. Goldring
Assistant Superintendent
Program Department

RJG/jh